

Earth Day was launched on April 22, 1970 in response to a massive oil spill that devastated the waters of Santa Barbara, California, in 1969. On that day, 20 million Americans mobilized to advocate for more sustainable and Earth-friendly practices. The efforts of these individuals directly contributed to the subsequent passage of landmark legislation such as the *Clean Air Act*, the *Clean Water Act*, and the *Endangered Species Act*.

Though much has been done to address this issue, much more remains. In fact, just two days ago we observed the one year anniversary of one of the worst environmental catastrophes of our time. The BP spill and its continuing aftermath underscore the grave importance of enacting progressive environmental practices. I encourage all Americans to join me today in supporting such initiatives.

Taking care of the Earth is more than acting as stewards of our soil, water, air, and wildlife. Because every living thing relies on clean air, forests, oceans, and ecosystems, caring for the environment amounts to caring for ourselves. Worldwide, air pollution is estimated to cause two million premature deaths each year. Experts predict, as many as 200 million people worldwide could be displaced in the next 70 years by droughts, rising sea levels, and flooding resulting from global warming. The cleanliness of our environment affects the price and quality of our food supply, the stability of our economy, and the quality of our daily lives. Our status as residents of planet Earth is intimately tied to the fate of the environment. Only through a concerted and committed effort will we be able to ensure we pass on a healthy planet to our children.

Above all else, Earth Day is about working together. It's true that the sheer magnitude of climate change, pollution, deforestation, and species extinction may seem insurmountable. Yet thankfully, we come together with a force just as vast. These are global challenges, but we are a global community. By promoting activism and awareness on this important day, we can move together towards a greener future.